

## 23 *The Practice of Good Work from the Pure Mind*

**Furthermore, Subhuti, this thing is equal. There is no high or low. Therefore it is called "Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment." It is attained by freedom from the existence of the self of man and of all beings and acceptance of life-span, and by cultivating all kinds of goodness.**

**Subhuti, though we speak of "goodness" the Tathagata says that there is no goodness; this is merely a name.**

Buddha affirms the equality of us all in that we all have Buddha-nature, this thing that has no characteristics. We don't have to be Buddhists or to follow any religion or philosophy - no-one is excluded.

However, although the Dharma is always the same, individuals may take any number of different approaches.

Sometimes people say that if we are already essentially awakened, why do we bother to practise? It is because we have forgotten our true nature. Of course, we are not compelled to practise at all and the choice is ours. But if we believe, with Socrates, that the unexamined life is not worth living, we will not be content to remain indefinitely in the world of birth and death.

Is it possible for us ordinary sentient beings to practise from the pure mind, seeing neither high nor

low, ignorance or enlightenment? It may be, if we try to do so without the four characteristics – ego, man, all beings, and acceptance. To see true nature is to “come home,” and we cannot come home if we don’t practise in one way or another.

The mind with no abode is the true mind and we come closer as we practise.

When Buddha says there is “no goodness,” it is because “goodness” is sticking to duality. However, without the mind of duality we can’t get to the pure mind. There is no goodness, so there is goodness. This seems like one paradox after another, but the Sutra is given as a way of liberation, not a course in logic. Buddha’s intention is pure and his compassion limitless.

*The Buddha in a previous life was the Bodhisattva Sataparibhuta. It was his habit to greet all beings in a polite manner by bowing to everyone and saying: “I dare not despise you sir (or madam) as you will be Buddha.”*

*Many of his contemporaries were not impressed by this and asked why a Bodhisattva should be so respectful to common people, many of whom had no interest in the way of Buddhism.*

*Sataparibhuta was unmoved by their criticism. He saw the Buddha in all beings and knew that essentially all of us are equal and worthy of respect. It was always to Buddha that he bowed.*

*A student came to the sixth Patriarch, who asked, “What thing have you brought with you?”*

*“To call it a thing is not correct,” replied the student.*

*“Have you attained anything through your practice?”*

*“There is no attainment which results from practice. There is no way in which it can be defiled.”*